



**helping homeless people,
help themselves**

To: Senator Mae Flexer, Representative Jack Hennessey and members of the Veterans Affairs Committee

Regarding: Bill No. 5353, An act concerning requirements for admission to the State Veterans Home

From: Brian Baker, Assistant Director, South Park Inn shelter

Date: February 23, 2016

It is with great pleasure that I have the opportunity to speak before the committee concerning Bill No. 5353. As the Assistant Director of the South Park Inn shelter and an employee of this small non-profit facility in Hartford for 31 years I have had the honor to have served the needs of over 55,000 men, women and children. Last year the South Park Inn housed over 150 individual veterans in the shelter and transitional program. Since 2008 the South Park Inn has ran a weekly drop-in-center for all homeless and at need veterans in Hartford. With the help of the VA, State Department of Veterans Affairs, American Legion, Hispanic American Veterans of Connecticut, other veteran service organizations, and the non-profit community we have successfully been able to connect over 1000 veterans to services.

The South Park Inn does not receive any government funding for our drop-in-center and every year the shelter needs to privately raise over half its operating budget. The shelter relies heavily on our veteran volunteers and the generosity of the community to provide needed services and in kind donations of clothing, toiletries, surplus items and furniture to help our veterans regain their independence.

Concerning Bill No.5353, we support the Bill that would change the required status of a veterans service to reflect the amended status that does not require a veteran to have served in time of war in order for admittance to the Rocky Hill Veteran home. We also support the change of residency requirement to thirty days instead of the current requirement of two years.

We have witnessed homeless veterans having to stay in shelter and being denied admittance to the Rocky Hill Veterans Home for these very reasons. We consider it a success to have veterans admitted to the Rocky Hill Veteran Home from our shelters and if Bill No. 5353 is enacted we have every belief that removal of these obstacles will greatly reduce a veteran's period of homelessness.

Street Outreach ■ Emergency Shelter ■ Transitional Living ■ Supportive Housing

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